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Walter H. Baker & Company

No. 5 Hamilton Place, Boston, Massachusetts

The New School-Ma'am

A Sketch in One Act

By
G. H. MCARTHUR

NOTICE TO PROFESSIONALS

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BOSTON
WALTER H. BAKER & CO.

1916

The New School-Ma'am

CHARACTERS

SILAS WETHERBEE, *aged sixty, of the school committee.*

HANK PETTINGILL, *aged fifty-five, of the school committee.*

GLADYS DEHAVEN, *aged twenty-five, an actress.*

PROPERTIES

Half sheet lithograph of girl in tights, one fan, one newspaper, stage money, pen, ink and paper.



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The New School-Ma'am

SCENE.—*Sitting-room in SILAS WETHERBEE'S house. Door in flat. Doors, R. and L. Table and chairs, R. Sofa, L. Hat-rack up back and other furniture to dress stage.*

SILAS (*discovered at rise, reading paper*). 'Nother one of them show troupes busted down to the county seat. I suppose somebody'll hav' to pay their fares hum' or else put them in the lockup. (*Knock at door, F.*) Come in.

HANK PETTINGILL (*entering, all dressed to kill*). Howdy, Si?

SILAS. Howdy, Hank? Wal, I swan! What you all toggged up fer?

HANK. I just got some news. Congrat'late me, Si.

SILAS. What's the matter? Cow had a calf?

HANK. Nope.

SILAS. Speckled hen got chickens?

HANK. Nary a chicken.

SILAS. Somebody die an' leave you a fortun'?

HANK. Nary a fortun'.

SILAS. Give it up. What 'tis?

HANK. I've found a schule-marm.

SILAS. No-o-o-o?

HANK. Yeeah.

SILAS. I want to know?

HANK. I've got one. I have, by gosh! (*Rube kick.*)

SILAS. Wal, I'm tarnation glad on it. Here schule opens next week and no schule-marm, an' now you got one. I congrat'late you, Hank. Where'd you git her?

HANK. Over to the county seat. You know my Cousin Zeke runs the hotel there?

SILAS. Yep.

HANK (*pulling out letter*). Wal, just listen to this. (*Reads.*) Dear Hank. Knowin' that you want a schule-marm, I'm goin' to send over a gal what belongs to a busted show trup'.

She looks right smart, an' I reckon she kin teach them kids over there. If you don't give her the job I'll have to feed her for nuthin'. Zeke.

SILAS. Wal, I'll be gum swuzzled !

HANK. P. S. I also sends you a picture of her which I tore off'n Jeff Simpson's barn.

SILAS. Great piece of work, Hank, but where's the pictur' ?

HANK. Right here in my pocket.

SILAS. Wal, trot her out.

HANK (*taking out litho of girl in tights, starts to open it ;*

SILAS *tries to take it*). Don't be in such a darn hurry. (*Opens it.*) Um-ah-ah.

SILAS. Holy jumpin' grasshoppers !

HANK (*reading*). Miss Gladys DeHaven, queen of the bal-let.

SILAS. Queen? Wal, I should snicker. Give it to me.

HANK. Git out ! I'm goin' to keep it. It's mine.

(*Puts it in pocket.*)

SILAS. All right, but how do you know she can teach schule?

HANK. We'll soon find out, an' even if she don't know much me an' you kin sorter hang 'round an' help her. Kind o' 'sistant teachers.

SILAS. Good idea, Hank. But let me give you some advice. Don't you go proposin' to her like you done to all the others. If ever a man needed a guardeen you do. It ain't safe to let you out of my sight when there's a female 'round. Why don't you take pattern after me? I was married once, an' that was a whole plenty. I'd like to see the female I'd marry.

HANK. So would I.

SILAS. And another thing, be perlite to her. You want to bow like this. (*Deep bow. HANK tries it. Sticks his foot out behind chair, upsets it.*) Gol darn it, you needn't kick the furniture over. It's easy seen you don't belong to elite sassiaty. Make a elegant bow like this. (*Elaborate bow ; falls on face. HANK laughs.*) That's right, you darn fool, laugh 'cause my foot slipped. You can bow any way you darn please.

HANK. Reckon I can bow without fallin' down.

SILAS. Wal, suppose we go to the hotel an' see if she's come yet.

HANK. Reckon so.

GLADYS DEHAVEN (*knocking, enters door flat; SILAS bows*). Say, cut that society stuff and tell me where I can find Hank Pettingill, of the school committee.

HANK. That's me, Miss. I'm Hank—I mean the school committee.

GLADYS. Tickled to death to meet you, old scout.

(*Walks a few steps lame.*)

HANK. What's the matter with yer foot?

GLADYS. I kicked a stone in the road and put my ankle on the blink.

HANK. On what?

GLADYS. Nobody home. I mean that I was tripping blithely along when a stone intruded itself in my path. I endeavored to remove it with my foot, or vulgarly speaking I kicked it, and in so doing I hurt my ankle.

SILAS (*to HANK*). Some talker, ain't she?

HANK. Sit right down here, Miss. (*By table.*)

GLADYS. Thank you. Who's the guy behind the hedge?

HANK. Eh?

GLADYS. Who's your friend?

SILAS. I'm Silas Wetherbee, member of the schule committee, seelectman, constabule, justice of the peace and sheriff of this here town. Just call on me when you want anybody arrested, married, or hung.

GLADYS. Glad to know you, Si. You're the head guy, eh? Run the whole town, I suppose?

SILAS. Wal, I come pretty doggone nigh running the whole shootin' match. Things go pretty nigh as I want them, an' if they don't I certainly rare around and kick up the sand.

GLADYS. You're some bullshooter, ain't you?

SILAS. No, sir; never shot a bull in my life.

GLADYS (*aside*). And they let it live.

HANK. What's your name, Miss?

GLADYS. Gladys DeHaven.

(*Both look at litho.*)

HANK }
SILAS } (*together*). The new schule-marm!

GLADYS. Oh, dear!

SILAS. Kin I do anything for yer, Miss?

GLADYS. Sure ; git down on your prayer bones and unlace my boot.

SILAS. On my what ?

GLADYS. Knees, knees ! (*Pulls up skirts. SILAS and HANK funny business.*) Come on, cut the comedy and git busy.

HANK. I'll fix it for you, marm. (*Crosses to her.*)

SILAS (*throwing HANK around*). No, you don't ! (*On knees.*)

HANK. Would you like a drink, Miss ?

GLADYS. Sure thing. Bring it along.

HANK. Si, get the lady a drink of water.

SILAS. Git it yourself, you darn fool. Can't you see I'm busy ?

HANK. Want some one to fan you, Miss ? (*Gets paper.*)

SILAS (*is through with shoe*). I'll fan you.

(*Gets hat. One on each side of her fanning. SILAS looks at her ; she winks, he smiles ; catches HANK's eye, looks away. HANK same business. Both look at her, then at ceiling, still fanning. She crosses to sofa. They discover her absence. They throw down fans and cross to her.*)

HANK. So you've come over here to teach schule for us, have yer ?

GLADYS. Yes, sir.

SILAS. Accordin' to the rules and statoots, I've got to ask you a few questions to see what you know. Excuse me while I confer with Hank.

GLADYS (*aside*). Well, if the rest of the bunch could see me now. I've got to get out of this burg somehow. No school teaching for me. It's so long since I went to school I forgot all I ever knew. Hope the examination will not be very strenuous or it will tap my brains. The answers I'll give them will take their breath away.

SILAS. As members of the schule committee, we have decided not to put you through a very rigid examination. We deduce that you look right smart, an' I reckon you be, so we'll only ask you a few questions. Now then, Hank, fire away.

HANK. First spell Con-stan-tye-noble.

GLADYS. C-o-n-s-t-a-n-s-t-e-n-o-b-l-e.

HANK (*looking at SILAS ; he nods*). Kerrect. Where is the Pacific Ocean ?

GLADYS. On the other side of the country.

HANK (*both same business*). How are you in 'rith-matic?

GLADYS. Oh, I'm some 'rith-maticker.

HANK. Wal, if it takes a man two hours to haul a load of hay five miles, how long will it take him to come back?

GLADYS. All depends on how fast he drives.

SILAS. Ain't no use talking, she's smart.

HANK. Now give me a sample of the 'rith-matic you'll give to the children. See if I can do it.

GLADYS. All right. Here's one. If it takes a two-months-old woodpecker with a rubber bill four hours to peck a hole in a two-inch board, how long will it take a bow-legged grass-hopper to kick all the seeds out of a dill pickle?

HANK. Let me see. Umm—it'll take—umm ——— (*Looks at SILAS ; he shakes.*) Wal, reckon that's 'nough on 'rith-matic. What do we git from Chiny?

GLADYS. Chinks and chop suey.

HANK. What do we get from the south?

GLADYS. Niggers.

HANK. What's the chief industry of the U. S.?

GLADYS. Politics and graft.

HANK. Reckon you'll do, Miss. Won't she, Si?

SILAS. Reckon so.

HANK. Si, go and git the book of rules and regulations we made.

SILAS. Want to git rid of me so as you can make a fool of yourself?

HANK. No, I don't. Get the book, Si ; perhaps the young lady would like to see it.

GLADYS. Sure thing, go ahead and get it.

SILAS. I'll get it for you, Miss.

(*Looks hard at HANK, exits, R.* HANK and GLADYS *flirt.*
HANK *is bashful.*)

GLADYS. Won't you sit down?

HANK. Yes, marm. (*Goes to sit, falls.*)

GLADYS. Say, git on to yourself. Can't you see I'm dying to have you sit beside me? (*HANK sits.*) Now tell me all about this school. How much salary?

HANK. We allus pay ten dollars a week.

GLADYS. As much as that? How kind you are ! I like a man like you ; so big, so strong. Now, if you weren't married !

HANK. Oh, I ain't married.

GLADYS. You're not? How is it that a fine-looking man like you isn't married?

HANK. Wal, I never could find one that wanted me.

GLADYS. Why, I know a lot of girls thet would jump at the chance to marry you, a fine, handsome man like you, and I know one that is right handy for you.

HANK. Do you mean you?

GLADYS (*cooly*). Who else?

HANK. Will you?

GLADYS. Wait, I want to ask a favor of you first, and if you grant it I'll tell you.

HANK. What's the favor? I'll do anything for you.

GLADYS. You know I'm a stranger here, no money or friends. Now, could you pay me a week's salary in advance?

HANK. Why, certain; here you be. (*Gives her money.*) Don't say nothing to Si, and you'll git yer salary jest the same.

GLADYS. Oh, thank you, Mr. Pettingill—Hank.

HANK. Miss DeHaven—eh—Gladdis, fairest of wimen, your air—er—your stars shine like eyes—no, that ain't it. Here at your knees—no, no—on your feet at my knees—

SILAS (*entering*). Ahem! (*HANK drops on hands.*) What the tarnation are you doing there, Hank?

HANK. Pickin' up tacks. (*Rises, comes up to SILAS.*)

SILAS. Didn't I tell you not to propose to her?

HANK. Never mind that; where's the book?

SILAS. It ain't here. I jest remember you took it hum t'other day.

HANK. Guess we can git along without it.

SILAS. No, go and git it; perhaps the young lady would like to see it.

GLADYS. Oh, yes. Please, Mr. Pettingill, go and git it.

HANK. For you, Miss, I would do anything.

(*Looks mad at SILAS. Then exits, D. F.*)

GLADYS. Now for another ten spot. (*Flirting business with SILAS.*) Won't you sit down?

SILAS. Sartin. (*Sits boldly by her.*) Was that old duffer proposin' to you when I came in?

GLADYS. I suppose he would have if you had not interrupted him.

SILAS. I'm darn glad of it. Blame fool proposes to every gal he meets.

GLADYS. It's a wonder he never got married. A fine-looking man like him.

SILAS. Fine-looking? Ha! ha! ha! Reckon Hank wouldn't take no beauty prize.

GLADYS. And you, Mr. Wetherbee, did you ever realize what a handsome man you are?

SILAS. Wal, I've got my share of good looks. I was a chipper looking young feller, an' I sartin was a great favorite with the gals, by thunder. (*Rube kick.*)

GLADYS. I think you must of been a regular flirt.

(*Jogs elbow in his ribs.*)

SILAS. Oh, you git out. (*Laughs. Jogs her in ribs.*) Say, where are you from?

GLADYS. New York.

SILAS. New York, eh?

(*Changes watch from left pocket to right.*)

GLADYS. So you like the girls, eh?

SILAS. Wal, I should snicker. (*Pokes her in ribs.*) You little rascal! Ha! ha! Say, what's your real name; not the one on the picter?

GLADYS. My real name is Bella.

SILAS. That's nice.

GLADYS. You think so?

SILAS. Yep. I got a mule named Bella. Say, yer married or single?

GLADYS. I'm a widow.

SILAS. Got any family?

GLADYS. Just a little son.

SILAS. That's nice. Boy or girl?

GLADYS. I said son. Are you married or single?

SILAS. I'm a widow, too. I've been a widow for twenty years.

GLADYS. Did you miss her much?

SILAS. Wal, no; not when I took good aim at her.

GLADYS. What did she die of?

SILAS. Shortness of breath. You see she went out of her mind, and I had to put her in a lunatic asylum.

GLADYS. What! insane?

SILAS. Crazier'n a bedbug. An' after a while she up an' died.

GLADYS. I'm sorry. I'm just as sorry as I can be.

(*Rubs his whiskers.*)

SILAS. Here, here, keep off the grass.

GLADYS. Well, what about the school?

SILAS. Well, that's so, I forgot all about it. All we have to do is to agree on salary. We paid the last gal ten dollars a week.

GLADYS. That's satisfactory; but I want you to do me a favor.

SILAS. Wal, jest spit her right out. I won't stop at nothin'.

GLADYS. I would like to have you pay me a week's salary in advance. I'm in a strange place without money or friends. I don't know what to do.

SILAS. Don't you worry 'bout nothin'. Here's the money, an' it won't come out of your salary nother. But don't say anything to Hank.

GLADYS. Oh, thank you, Mr. Wetherbee, you're awfully good. I could learn to love a man like you.

SILAS. Ah, git out. I'm sixty years old, and you ain't twenty-five.

GLADYS. Sixty? Nonsense, you don't look a day over forty.

SILAS. Do tell. You know the old saying, A man's as old as he feels. I feel like a two-year-old.

GLADYS. Yes, and there's another saying, Better be an old man's darling than a young man's slave.

SILAS. Shucks, you wouldn't marry an old man like me!

GLADYS. You haven't asked me yet.

(Looks at him coyly.)

SILAS. I'll do it now, by gosh I will. *(On knees.)* Will you or will you not marry me?

HANK *(entering)*. Si! *(SILAS falls on hands.)* What yer doing?

SILAS. Picking up tacks.

HANK. Ha, ha! Caught you at it, didn't I? Say, Miss, you wouldn't marry a little shrivelled up, bald-headed, sawed-off runt like him!

SILAS. You wouldn't marry a long, lanky, slap sided, flat footed, pie face old bear cat like him!

GLADYS. Now, now, don't start any rough house, or I'll slam one of you. Of course I can't marry both of you, but I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll write a letter and in it I'll put the name of the lucky man. I haven't the heart to stay and see the sorrow of the rejected one, so you must promise not to read it until I am gone.

SILAS. All right. Here's pen, ink and paper.

(Both do comedy business while she writes.)

GLADYS *(putting letter in envelope)*. Now, remember, don't open it until I am gone. I'm going back to the hotel now. Good-bye. *(Laughs and exits.)*

HANK. What the thunder is she laughing at?

SILAS. She's a-laughing at you, you old crow-bait, 'cause I'm the lucky man.

HANK. She's a-going to marry me.

SILAS. She ain't, nuther.

HANK. She is, and I'm going to star her.

SILAS. Star her? Starve her, you mean.

HANK. Do you mean to say I ain't got money enough to support a wife? You old bald-headed polictacial grafter.

SILAS. Grafter? Don't you call me a grafter, you puddin'-headed drunkard.

HANK. Drunkard? That settles it. You an' me hev been friends thirty years, but it stops right here. Prepare to meet your doom.

SILAS. Ain't no drunkard kin call me a grafter.

(Rube fight business.)

HANK. Hold on there, you bantam rooster, afore I knocks the tar out of you. I'll tell you that she said she'd marry me if I done her a favor.

SILAS. A favor? Did you give her ten dollars?

HANK. Did you?

SILAS. Yes.

HANK. Wal, I'll be darned!

(Both make dive for letter. SILAS gets it; reads.)

SILAS. I am sorry I can't marry either one of you, because I have a husband in New York, where I'm going on the next train. *(Looks at HANK.)* I'm a darned old fool.

HANK. I'm an old fool, too.

SILAS. I didn't mean the things I said about you.

HANK. Me nuther.

SILAS. Hanky!

HANK. Si!

(Both embrace, patting each other on the back as curtain falls.)

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Any number of students.

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ACT II.—Exterior of Westward College. The home of Professor Rex.

ACT III.—Quincy, Jr.'s, law office out West four years later.

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